1: Melamid K-4 (no date) 1953 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4
Qatar MK3

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF TRUCIAL 'OMAN AND QATAR

ALEXANDER MELAMID

Q 178 T 178

UNTIL the 1930's pirating, slave trading, and arms smuggling were the occupations of the native population on the southeast shores of the Persian Gulf, and they largely determined the status of the region in international affairs. Since then the oil industry, with its manifold economic and political aspects, has begun to replace these earlier "trades." The effect of this change offers an unusual insight into the evolution of states and their territorial and maritime sovereignty. Despite the present importance of the Persian Gulf in world affairs, information on Trucial 'Oman, and to a smaller extent on Qatar, is scarce and contradictory.*

The Physical and Historical Background

Q 133 T 133

Physically, the south coast of the Persian Gulf is uninviting. Shallow waters with dangerous reefs fringe the beaches, and the bars across the mouths of the many inlets and coastal creeks make them inaccessible to the smallest ocean-going vessels. The shore line forms the margin of a low, undulating plateau with a surface of sand or loose stones, which merges to the south into the even less hospitable and little-known desert of the Rub' al Khali. Occasionally the plateau is interrupted by shallow salt pans or by insignificant hills that may expose the bedrock, mainly Eocene limestone. There are no continuous wadies, or any other marked features. The low northern extension of the mountains of 'Oman, which terminates in the rugged and deeply indented peninsula of Masandam, forms the eastern boundary of the region. Rainfall is estimated at less than five inches a year, falling in a few winter showers. Temperatures on the coast are high: averages range from the high sixties in January to the nineties in July. Humidity is also high. Because of the oppressive summer weather, the oil company operating in Qatar suspends the work of its seismographic exploration crews from May to November. However, the humidity does not penetrate far into the interior, and exploratory activities in, for example, the neighboring inland oil fields of Saudi Arabia continue throughout the year.

Q 132 T 132 Q 315

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The vegetation is scanty. Economically useful plants that grow without irrigation can feed only camels, sheep, and goats. Aside from a stable kept by the sheikh of Ajman, no horses are reported anywhere, and even the number of cattle is small.

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2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

promontory. On one side it is bounded by a line running from Dubai and the village of Bai'ah on the east coast to Ras Sha'am on the west coast, and so divides it from the Ruus-al-Jibal district of the Oman Sultanate to the north; on another, by a line which leaves the Gulf between Khor Kalba and Murair, and excluding the Mahadah and Jau districts to the south, joins Khatam. Westwards of Khatam the inland limit of Trucial Oman is at the commencement of the Rub-al-Khali and Jafurah deserts.

Geographically, the Trucial Oman coast consists of a maritime belt, or taff, and islands; of inland plains, and of a mountain system. The eastern coast, that washed by the Gulf of Oman, is bold, somewhat resembling the coast of Ruus-al-Jibal, and the hills in places come down to the water's edge. The western coast, lying within the Persian Gulf, is low and monotonous, although in the north it is diversified by occasional date groves, especially by those of the Sur tract between Rams and Ras-al-Khaimah, but as the coast trends away to the south and west the trees languish, and at Abu Dhabi they cease altogether. The hills also, which at Ras-al-Khaimah town form a pleasing background, rapidly recede inland and are soon lost to view from seaward as the coast is followed to the south-west.

Salt-water creeks abound on this coast, and the lagoons of Ras-al-Khaimah town and near the town of Abu Dhabi have a considerable superficies, yet there are no inlets of real importance. At Dubai there is a fairly large creek which is used as an alighting area for flying-boats, and another at Sharjah town, which is too shallow even at high-tide to be of any use. The creeks sometimes unite inland to form backwaters and mangrove swamps, which are separated by a short distance only from the coast; and quasi-islands, some inhabited and some not, are created in this manner.

Beyond Abu Dhabi, as far as Khor-al-Odaid, the coast is almost unknown; it is barren and generally low, but has some bluff headlands. The only eminence and conspicuous landmark on the coast of Trucial Oman, Dhafrah being excluded, is Jabal-al-Ali, in Dubai territory. In the Gulf of Oman the sea is deep and at no great distance from shore, but in the Persian Gulf it is open and free from dangers if somewhat shallow; here the coast lies open to the full fury of the Shamal, but there are no harbours or sheltered anchorages except for boats, and landing is often difficult. West of Sharjah the coast is a labyrinth of islands, shoals and reefs, imperfectly surveyed and so intricate that even Arab vessels, if larger than

133 pearl boats, avoid these waters. It is here that the principal Oman pearl banks lie. The most important islands off the Trucial Coast are Bu Musa, which contains a red ochre mine; Tunb; Sir Bu Na'air; Yas, where there is an R.A.F. emergency landing ground; and Dalmah.

132 The climate is extremely severe in the summer months. From May to October, the combined heat and humidity are very trying to Europeans; temperatures of 115° F. and humidity of 98° are common. In the winter months, from November to February, it is pleasantly cool by day and cold at night, but frost is unknown; at this time the weather on the coast is frequently boisterous. Rainfall averages about 5 in. a year, and falls chiefly in mid-winter, when storms are extremely severe. On 30th November, 1944, the Indian Meteorological department at Sharjah recorded a rainfall of 1.75 in. within twenty minutes and a wind of 78 miles an hour.

162 Tribally and racially the people of the Trucial Coast are very mixed, Arabs, Persians, Baluchis, Hindus, and a large number of Arab slaves and their progeny forming the bulk of the population. The Bedouins, who some years ago were estimated to number 8,000, are mostly confined to the open desert, although they are now more amiably disposed to the settled tribes and townships than formerly; the largest of the Bedouin tribes in Oman is that of the Beni Qitab, whose ruler is the Sheikh Mahommed bin Ali. The Bedouins live chiefly by their livestock, although some nowadays take part in pearling and fishing during the season. In winter time, when there is a fine amount of herbage for their herds, they scatter and move from encampment to encampment, but in summer they congregate in large numbers around the more copious wells in the desert. The Jiri plain in the north and Bainumah in the west, are favourite places.

241 There is little agriculture in Trucial Oman. Dates can be grown in most places, although the Arabs are extremely conservative and are averse from attempting new projects. The only large-scale date plantations are at Falaj-al-Ali and Djaidh. Inland, west of the Shimailiyah mountains and the Sir Wadhi, some cereals, wheat, tobacco and *jowari* are grown, and vegetables can be raised by means
231 of well irrigation. Cows, donkeys, camels, goats and sheep are kept, and plenty of poultry, but little appears to be known of diseases of the latter, and in 1944 they died in large numbers. The normal food for cattle is fish and boiled date stones, and herbage when it can be found. Except for the famous stables of Sheikh

000 of oil exploitation, have visited the interior of Central Arabia and the coastal regions of Basra, Kuwait, or the Hedjaz. The independent principalities of Oman, however, and the vast desert of Rub-al-Khali to the south-west, are not so well known. Large tracts of this region, several hundred square miles in extent, have never been traversed. Not only no European, but, in some cases, no Arab, has trod their lonely sands. St. John Philby, who describes his experiences with Scriptural clarity in *The Empty Quarter*, did indeed cross the Rub-al-Khali from Dhufar to Qatar, but since this vast desert is almost a thousand miles wide, his remarkable journey cannot be regarded as adding more than a fragment to our minute knowledge of this 'lost world'. Since then, Allied pilots and, in one instance, Italians who set out from Eritrea to bomb Bahrein and Abadan but who never returned to their base, have flown over the Rub-al-Khali and have contributed some valuable reconnaissance photographs and survey records, but the desert from Salala to Muscat and from Muscat to Bahrein still holds secrets which may possibly remain untold for a century from now.

131 The region known as Oman lies in south-east Arabia between the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. In area it is about the size of Ireland. The inhabited portion extends from the Oman sultanate, north of Muscat, to the Tafurah desert in the west. The fort which was my headquarters at Sharjah, a small inland principality, was situated in what is known as the Trucial Oman Coast.

● 133 One normally thinks of the desert as being one vast expanse of sand, rather like the sandy plains of North Africa. In Oman this monotony of landscape is not so prevalent. From Ras-al-Khaimah, on the northern shore, to Muscat in the south, there runs a chain of mountains, in places fifty miles wide, with peaks rising to 8,000 feet. Mostly volcanic, they are composed of black basalt, igneous rocks and red sandstone, the different stratæ forming a picturesque *mise-en-scène* when viewed from the distance. Inland, especially 311 in the winter months, the wadhis become foaming torrents and in 137 the valleys the land is clothed in tender green; frankincense and acacia trees, broom and scented clover, yield a fragrance equal to the sweetest perfume of violets in a Devon lane. Then, scattered through this region in the vicinity of the wells, are large date plantations and village gardens verdant with pomegranate and fig trees. Even the desert itself could scarcely be termed barren, for it is mostly covered with various species of shrub and low, sap-filled plants of the stone-crop order. I have seen the most arid parts

with the greatly-extended air services which had developed since those early days.

The radio officer came and reported that he had received the 'all clear' from the flying-boat. We locked up the rest-house, dismissed the serangs, and crowded into the two station wagons which were to take us the ten miles to the Fort. It was a tight squeeze, with bearers and clerks sitting on each others' knees in the back seat, but since transport is scarce in the desert, I found this was the customary way of travelling.

There was a track of sorts,* beaten out by the wheels of countless vehicles, which wound its way around the sand dunes and the date palms. In hot weather the desert is as hard as a macadam road, and one can drive almost anywhere, but in the season of the rains flooding is frequent, and once you get stuck in a soft patch nothing less than a four-wheel drive truck with a crane will get you out. So we stuck to the road and did a fairly comfortable thirty miles an hour through the most monotonous country I have ever seen. Fortunately the rest of the desert is not like this. Between Sharjah and Dubai the landscape is as flat as a table, and the sand a dun, muddy grey, without a single bit of scrub or camel grass to relieve it.

There was little activity on the road. A flock of black goats scattered as we drove past, the young herdsman casting us a scared glance. A fat merchant on a donkey, his bare legs almost touching the ground, trotted by, a dignified expression on his face which contrasted comically with his primitive mode of travel. Away to the dunes on our left, a train of loaded camels trudged majestically towards a Bedouin encampment, their riders carrying long, silver-chased rifles. Ahead there gleamed in the sun what looked like a wide, shallow lake. Our driver made straight towards it; as we advanced so it receded, and eventually it evaporated into the air. I have often heard it said that these mirages are due to heat reflection, but an old Arab whom I knew said they were caused by the salt crystals and silicates in the sand, which reflected the sun like a mirror. Science may not accept his theory, but I have often picked up large flakes of salt from the desert which sparkled like fragments of glass.

We approached the village of Khan, a small dependancy of Sharjah, whose minarets and white-walled houses appeared to float in the air like a fairy city—again the effect of a mirage. Five more miles and we skirted a high range of sand dunes and soon glimpsed the radio masts and white, crenellated walls of our fortress home. A mile behind it the dun stone walls of the sheikh's palace

*[Between Dubai and Sharjah, ca. 10 miles apart -- August

000 The cars were running fairly well, but the glare from the sun was very trying to the eyes, in spite of tinted glasses. The roofs of the cars became so hot that the paint on the surface bubbled, and inside it was suffocating. We made a halt after about thirty miles' hard driving, had a smoke, and a drink from our tea flasks. To the north of us there shimmered what appeared to be a vast lake. I started to walk towards it and it gradually receded, turning out to be, as I had suspected, a perfect mirage, with waves and even a thin line of breakers on the shore. When I reached the spot where the 'lake' had been, I noticed, on looking down at the ground, that it sparkled as if covered with minute crystals. The surface was whiter than that of the surrounding desert, and I found that it consisted of a thin layer or crust of salt, intermingled with silica. A slice about six inches in diameter, and an eighth of an inch thick, was easily levered off and inspected by the company. I had literally succeeded in taking a piece of mirage in my hands. In case the scientifically-minded should quibble over this theory, I hasten to add that, although these saline-silica crystals undoubtedly caused this particular mirage, I should hesitate to ascribe all mirages as being due to the same cause. Others may possibly be due to high-frequency radiation of solar light waves striking the earth and being reflected back, and viewed from a favourable angle by the spectator.

133 The sand-plain[1] which we were now traversing, which was composed of sun-baked mud, showed signs of having been flooded at high-tide; it soon gave way to soft sandhills, and we rocked and swayed along for several miles until at last we reached the shore. Fortunately the tide was far out and, by creeping under the low cliffs, we contrived to keep our wheels out of the soft mud. A sandbank rose out of the cobalt sea until it formed a gleaming, white spit of land, forming a narrow creek, on the far side of which [361] stood out mistily the little town of Umm-al-Quain. The circular watch-towers, plaster houses and white-walled palace of the sheikh looked fairy-like in the morning sunlight. A white-sailed dhow swept gracefully down the creek and the fronds of the date palms swayed in the light breeze.

137 Before us the road swept suddenly into a sharp gradient and we entered the long, green valley of Hadaithah. Here, in startling contrast to the arid desert we had left behind us, the vegetation was lush and plentiful. Spring had come early to the valley and even the insipid neam trees (a species of acacia) had a verdant, pristine

[1] [Between Sharjah and Ras-al-Khaimah--Analyst]

beauty in their wiry branches and finely serrated leaves. In their shade the grasses grew tall and vivid, while around were masses of small yellow flowers which resembled the wild marguerite.

We had gone only a few miles when the station wagon broke down, necessitating a stop for repairs. While the engineer poked his head under the bonnet, I took a stroll in the valley and climbed the high sandbanks in order to observe the vegetation more closely. To my surprise, I found several varieties of flowers common to the English countryside growing in profusion in this wilderness. According to the notes I made at the time there were white campions, vetch, broom (the flowers were smaller than ours and lacking in perfume), sorrel, dandelion, convolvulus, a small yellow flower which resembled 'Old Lady's Slipper', and camel-grass; the last-named having a segmented stalk and spear-like leaves not unlike bamboo, of which it may be a distant relative. This grass grew to a height of nearly four feet.

There were also clumps of *ashgar*, the rubbery-leaved bush which exudes a highly-poisonous sap, and whose dark purple flowers have a passionate, poppy-like beauty. The sandy ground was full of burrows made by rock lizards, rabbits and desert rats, though I saw none of these animals on this stage of the journey. Locusts and grasshoppers were plentiful, and I saw several Red Admiral, Tortoiseshell and Comma butterflies, also a large black ant marked with white spots, with elongated legs which raised its body an eighth of an inch above the ground.

The engine repaired, we drove on for another twenty miles, until the granite ridges of Ruus-al-Jibal came into sight. This range of hills, which stretches from the northernmost tip of the peninsula to as far south as Muscat, varies in height from 2,000 to 8,000 feet. Commanders of aircraft using this route have assured me, however, that the latter figure is an error, and that the maps are incorrectly marked. The mountains looked blue in the distance, as all mountains do, but as we approached them the dark patches became honey-coloured cliffs, and the light sweeps turned into ridges and plateaux of variegated strata. As mountains go, they are not beautiful in the æsthetic Alpine sense, yet there is a certain grandeur about their irregular peaks and the ragged angles of the cliffs. The violet and pink slopes were most soothing to our desert-tired eyes.

In an unexpected dip in the valley we came upon a herd of camels grazing on the tender thorn leaves; there were about six calves

BOOK THREE

THE PIRATE COAST

CHAPTER IX

DURING week-ends and in the afternoon, when the day's work was finished and the heat of the sun had diminished, I would spend my spare time in studying Arabic, making entries in my personal diary, or taking walks into the surrounding desert. These walks were rather limited in scope, because one cannot go far in the sand on foot without getting tired, and there was little in the immediate vicinity of Sharjah in the way of scenic beauty. Bounded on the north-west by the creek and the sea, Sharjah lies at the tip of the peninsula with nothing but flat, featureless desert between it and the mountain ranges, the nearest point of which is seventy miles. To the south-west, if you diverge from the coast-line, there is nothing but scrub and sandhills which stretch interminably into the Rub-al-Khali, that vast expanse of desert known as the 'Empty Quarter' whose width exceeds a thousand miles. I have heard of camel caravans which took a year to traverse this desert; they were on their way from Baraimi to Aden, and the journey occupied a year's travelling. During this time they encountered not more than five towns and ten Bedouin encampments.

One of my favourite walks was to the sheikh's watch-tower which stood on a high sandhill five miles due east of the Fort. To approach it one had to pass a site known locally as the 'cemetery', where, scattered over a large tract of desert, were the wrecked remains of R.A.F. Bisleys, Wellingtons and Blenheims which had crashed in the vicinity. Fragments of airscrews, engine parts and spars lay in untidy heaps where they had been thrown by salvage parties or foraging Arabs, whilst the skeleton-like carcases of fuselage and cockpit were the haunt of snakes, lizards and desert rats.

It was a dismal sight, with the torn fabric fluttering in the wind, and perhaps a fragment of a glove or flying-helmet to remind one of a tragedy soon forgotten and all too common in the early days

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

000 of the war, when certain types of aircraft were unreliable and pilots inexperienced in desert conditions. A hundred yards away, on a hill surrounded by barbed wire, was the English cemetery. Here, a dozen little white wooden crosses marked the last resting places of men who would never again see the green fields and lanes of Kent or Yorkshire. Overhead, in the hard blue sky, the vultures soared and on the rocks the lizards scurried from the shadows of their wings.

A rough track in the sand led to the tower; it had been made by American trucks, the drivers of which had been hunting gazelle
712 or houbari, the wild bustard. The tower,[1] which was about sixty feet high, was built of large stones cemented together with *juss*, the local mortar. Situated on the highest part of the sandhill, a view of at least twenty miles could be obtained from the crenellated top. At dusk the sheikh's Askhari guards would take their stand beside a little peep-hole in the walls, on the look-out for any raiders who might venture into Sharjah territory. In the daytime a round boulder, cunningly camouflaged with rags to look like a human head, would be affixed to the battlemented top, and the effect of this simple deception was most realistic. For several weeks I was convinced that an Arab sentry was on guard there, even when I inspected it through Zeiss field-glasses, and it was only when I climbed the tower with one of the sheikh's sons that I discovered the trick. These towers are a regular feature of every Arab town in Oman, and one sees scores of them dotted all over the landscape, looking rather like old Norfolk mills without their sails.

133 A high ridge of dunes rises gradually behind the tower, and
137 from the top of these one has an amazing view of the distant mountains. Gilded by the late afternoon sun, the peaks and passes assume changing colours, varying from deep purple to misty violet and terra-cotta pink. The desert beyond the dunes changes in character, due probably to the presence of subterranean streams, and one finds miniature *wadhis* and *nullahs* luxuriant with neam copses, and mossy banks where lush grass grows between tiny desert daisies and dandelions. In these banks I have found clumps of those edible fungi, the *fagar* and *tartuth*, both Arab delicacies, bushes of wild berries, and stunted thorn trees called, I believe, Spici Christi.

136 Unfortunately my knowledge of botany and zoology is abysmally limited, and I was unable to identify many species which were unfamiliar to me; as a scientific record of wild life in the Gulf

1 - [The Sheikh's watch-tower 5 miles east of Sharjah]

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

seaport famous to mariners for its watch-towers which guard the hills behind the town, we forked right and drove along the main caravan route to Falaj-al-'Ali, which is rather rough and tortuous.

The first ten miles beyond Umm-al-Quwain were monotonous, a flat expanse of brownish grey desert, unrelieved by the slightest elevation. We were above sea-level, but the high dunes behind the town obscured all but a shimmer of blue horizon. Later we entered a *batah*, a depression or valley resembling the *Jiri* at Ras-al-Khaimah. This valley, some ten miles long, between terraces of steep sandhills, was luxuriant with acacia trees, both of the *gharf* (flat-topped) and *sumr* (tall) varieties; there were also species of furze and broom, bamboo grass, *abal* and *ashgar* bushes, camel thorn and the thorny *Spici Christi*.

It was astonishingly green, rather like an English glade, so that one half expected to find violets and primroses growing under the clumps of *neam* trees. Water must have been plentiful here, for we saw numerous wells and passed scattered groups of camels grazing on the dry grasses and *abal* bushes. Flowering plants were numerous, including one with tiny white petals, with a furry, grey-green leaf, which none of us could identify; also a yellow-flowering clover which smelt like mimosa. There were a great many locusts, both hoppers in the gregarious stage, and large yellow adults (solitary stage), and I captured several specimens in the glass bottle which Captain Joyce, of the Anti-Locust Commission, had given to me. Anyone travelling in the desert is usually requested to report the presence of locusts, since the agents of the Commission are thus able to track the movements, feeding and breeding grounds of these destructive insects.

Other insects we noticed, on stopping at Falaj-al-'Ali for a smoke and a cup of tea, were large black ants with white spots, a leaf-cutter bee (*Megachile*), a large black beetle of the *Rhytinota reichei* species, grasshoppers, butterflies, including a red admiral and a comma; we also saw a 'bacon beetle', common in this part of Oman, which feeds on dry carcases. The ant was unlike any species I had ever seen in the desert. It was a quarter of an inch long, with five white spots on its back (wings); a thin, elongated neck separated the head from the body, and the spidery legs were almost a quarter of an inch from the ground, giving it a curious jerky walk. Jasim said that its bite was poisonous.

Shrikes and larks (*hamra*) darted from behind the sandstone rocks as we approached, and although we looked for their nests we found

Falaj al Ali lay five miles beyond the camp, but we skirted the
487 town and trailed over large, gently-undulating plains, varied at intervals by rougher patches formed by the confluence of dunes and ridges. Reaching a steep escarpment with a one-in-three gradient, the truck behind us stuck firmly in the sand. The driver foolishly tried to reverse, the wheels becoming more deeply embedded than ever. We decided to abandon it until our return, leaving a coolie in charge and, by changing gears, just managed to climb the rise with our remaining truck by collecting armfuls of dead boughs and *ashgar* leaves, which we strewed over the yielding sand. It was hot work and we were exhausted by the time we had climbed back into the car.

487 The end of the valley began to broaden and gave way to an
133 open plain, the vegetation gradually thinning out until nothing but *abal* bushes were to be seen. A small gazelle, called by the Arabs *dhabi*, or in some parts *ghazal*, darted from behind a bush where it had been grazing, but it was away too quickly for us to attempt a shot; in any case, a bullet from a moving car would have been wasted. The mountains of the Shimailiyah now loomed ahead in the far distance, with the high, isolated peak of Jebel Faiyah thirty miles to the south-east. This peak, which lies beyond Djaidh, is a serrated mass of red and purple sandstone, shaped like a Welsh hat, with the twin, nippled peaks of Qualiddi beside it.

The desert road at this stage disappeared as we entered a wide, dried-up river bed, lined with fine black sand and rubble; this was alluvial deposit washed down from the mountains, and Williamson, our geologist, informed us that it was mostly basalt and igneous rock of the Eocene period, of volcanic origin. Some of the stones were striped with white and contained quartz. Basalt appears to be the geological basis of the higher peaks, intermingled with limestone and sandstone strata, quartz, serpentine and gypsum; there are also traces of selenite and alabaster, connected with Miocene beds, and deposits of limonite and ironstone. Further north, in the Ruus-al-Jibal, are older rocks of the Jurassic and Triassic periods, although the foothills around Djaidh are of white limestone and chalk, full of cretacious fossils.

The scenery was extremely wild and barren here, and we passed through a small gorge with high basalt cliffs, where not a shrub or a blade of grass was to be seen. The radiator was getting hot, so we stopped for half an hour to allow it to cool and also to eat our lunch. We could not have chosen a more unfavourable spot. No sooner had we sat with our backs to a large rock than the Shimal

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

started to blow, and first 'dust devils', then a great cloud of black sand, began to sweep all round us. The sandwiches were ruined, except those in one carton I had not opened, and our eyes smarted for several minutes. The gale quickly died down and we decided to leave at once; it was nearly midday and we wished to reach Djaidh before the hour of prayer.

As we drew close to Djaidh, the plantations of which we could just see through the haze, the ground became extremely rocky, the track leading over a high steppe, which we estimated to be six hundred feet above sea level; this steppe was strewn with large basalt boulders, some as large as a football, which made steering very difficult. The stones were curiously formed and highly polished, some being striped with white selenite. Williamson, who collected several specimens, told us that there is a certain amount of gold and copper in the mountains here. They are practically unexplored, although a geological survey was made of the Ruus-al-Jibal range recently, the results being published in the Quarterly Journal of the Royal Geological Society. In the passes of these hills are the strongholds of the wild and truculent Shi'hou tribe, some of whom I encountered on my last trip to Ras-al-Khaimah.

The steppe gradually sloped towards a rocky *batah*, a narrow and almost treeless valley, which was in reality a dried-up river bed; the force of the water which flung the boulders down the hillsides must have been tremendous, probably the result of a burst watershed. Williamson believes it may have occurred several thousand years ago, although in the rain season torrents of water annually wash down from the hills and a wide river flows through a mountain pass from Muraq-quibat to Kalba, where it reaches the sea. After five miles the bed narrowed into a small *wadhi*, which in turn gave way to luxuriant, park-like country, thickly wooded with tall acacias, amongst which we spotted herds of wild black donkeys.

A mile ahead was the date plantation. It was the hour of prayer, so we stopped the car and wandered through the dark, jungle-like paths while Jasim, Sheikh Hamid and the drivers said their devotions. The plantation is cross-sectioned by two wide main paths, with high enclosures of palm-leaf fencing on either side; let into this fence at intervals are little wicket gates, which lead to grass paths of a man's width running between the trees. A 'cover' crop of clover, grass and shrub is cultivated at the roots of the trees, as this

The headman*, a fine-looking old Arab 576
with a white beard and keen eyes, came forward to greet us and introduced us to the local gentry.

They shook us by the hand, the kiss of honour being reserved for Sheikh Hamid alone. Salim bin Raschid, the headman, amazed us by declaring that he had anticipated our visit. When we enquired how this was, he merely shook his head and smiled. The only explanation I can give is that some servant of the Residency Agent's at Sharjah had passed the information to a friend, and that the news had been conveyed to Djaidh by a passing caravan. The argument against this is that the decision to make the journey was only made by Captain Tandy the day previously, although he had discussed it with Jasim.

The headman allowed me to take a photograph of him and insisted on shaking my hand again when I had done so. The Arabs do not shake hands vigorously, as we do, but in a gentle, feminine way, letting the tips of their fingers linger in your palm. Accom- 312
panied by the notables, we inspected the wells, where stalwart young negroes at once assumed an air of great preoccupation and began hauling at the winches and emptying the full baskets which came up. We peered down the well and could just see the heads of the labourers working in the channel. The headman said they had just cleared the well base after a heavy fall of sand, and had increased the height of the roof to eight feet. He assured Tandy that the work was making good progress and that he would be personally responsible to the Sheikh of Sharjah for its continuance.

We spent half an hour at the wells, where Tandy and William- 487
son engaged in technical discussions with the Arab engineers, and 133
then took the road leading to the Beni Quitab encampment. No one seemed to know quite where it was, except that it lay towards the lower slopes of Jebel Faiyah, and was about twelve miles distant. Salim lent us a couple of guides, who clung precariously to the running boards as we plunged across the river bed and sped up the steep, grass-covered banks. Here we entered a country which looked very much like the veldt of South Africa; in fact, just the sort of terrain in which one expects to find lions.

This country, called by the Arabs *Marbakh abu Laila*, extends 487
at the foot of the mountains from Muraq-qibat to Baraimi, a 133
distance of nearly a hundred miles, and is about ten miles in width. 136
It is completely wild, the haunt of gazelle, hares, mountain wolves and occasionally the rare, long-horned oryx. It was here, many years ago, that Williamson shot a leopard, an animal which previous

*[at Djaidh -- Analyst]

travellers had declared did not exist in Oman. There was no road and the ground was hard and very bumpy, full of holes and nullahs. Tall grasses and shrubs grew in profusion, including *shinan* and the bright-green *harm* as well as some *Hadh* bushes, indicative of recent rain or heavy dews. The yellow flowers of the *zahr* blossomed in abundance, attracting myriads of insects, whilst several hares darted ahead of our truck and scurried away into their holes. The acacia (*samr*) trees grew in thin copses and were frequently fifteen feet high, which is unusual in this part of the desert.

When we had traversed five miles of this wooded country without so much as a trace of human life, our guides became nervous and begged to be allowed to return to Djaidh. We let them go, giving them a handful of biscuits and some tobacco as a gift, but before they left us they pointed to a site some two miles ahead where, they said, the *Badu* had last encamped. When we came upon this site we did, indeed, find the remains of a camp, the grass being lighter in patches than the surrounding herbage, whilst nearby was an old well and the dead embers of a fire. But of the *Badu* there was no sign.

We sat on a hillock for a few minutes, drinking tea, while Tandy and Williamson made a survey of the land; there were no tracks to guide us and nothing to indicate where the *Badu* might have concealed themselves. Sheikh Hamid, an amusing raconteur, recounted tales of the Beni Quitab tribe. These nomads number several thousand and, split into various sections, they roam all over the Oman country; branches of this tribe are to be found in the Nejd and Kuwait, but these have separate sheikhs and do not owe allegiance to Mohammed bin Ali. They are a wild, simple people, despising both the town dwellers and those who work with their hands. They live on dates, which they mostly steal, camels' milk, fish and rice. Some of these commodities they are obliged to buy, and the money for this purpose they obtain by selling camels, animal skins, including wolves, lizard and ibex; donkeys, wild honey, cheese and gazelle meat.

The Beni Quitab are famous camel breeders and during our trip across the *Marbakh* we saw large herds of these animals with their calves. They also breed donkeys, capturing the wild asses when young, and gather wild honey from the plains. Although they do as little work as possible, they cultivate small patches of ground to which they return twice a year, growing millet and tobacco, which they smoke in tiny pipes with cane stems.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

number whose exportation from their native countries has been altogether prevented by British naval and other measures.

I have been informed that a regular slave market also exists at the small town of Harfit, as well as at Baraimi, the former being a region owned jointly by the Sultan of Muscat and the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, although it is too far from the Sultan's seat to make the enforcement of police measures feasible. Several official delegations have been despatched to Baraimi and Harfit in the past to investigate the slave trade, but the Bedouins, who are the principal slave dealers, have a highly-developed intelligence service and long before the approach of any foreigner or political agent the slaves are concealed and the market closed. This deception makes it extremely difficult to obtain any direct evidence. When taxed with the matter, the sheikhs will deny most emphatically that the importation or sale of slaves takes place in their territories.

One sheikh, who was charged a few years ago with aiding and abetting the dealers, went so far as to admit that slaves were imported by Bedouins from Oman proper into the Trucial Oman Coast by caravan. It has also been reported that numbers of slaves are exported to Qatar by sea, but this has not been verified.

On the occasion of Sir Geoffrey Prior's visit to Baraimi, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I informed him that I suspected that a slave market existed there and asked if I could accompany him on his journey. Unfortunately, he declined, and I was very disappointed at the time, for not only had I wished to investigate for myself the tales of slave-dealing in this district, but I also desired to be present at the 'durbar', since it is very seldom that all the principal sheikhs and headmen of the Trucial Oman Coast can be met together. At first it was decided that the sheikhs should meet at the Fort and, after some refreshment, repair to Baraimi by car, but Mohammed bin Ali and several other sheikhs were averse from coming to the camp, and the meeting place had to be changed to Baraimi itself.

Not long after the departure of Sir Geoffrey for Bushire, I persuaded the Khan Bahadur Abdur bin Razzak to lend me a reliable guide and, accompanied by an American friend and two Askhari guards, I set out for Baraimi in a jeep. The journey occupied about five hours each way, the route taken being via Dubai and the wild, trackless country west of Yidaiyah, which consists for the most part of dunes and high ridges, undulating

481 rose-pink downs and grass-covered depressions covered with the
133 charming *zahr* plant. The going was difficult and no vehicle other than a jeep could have made it; in addition to the soft sand, there were sudden outcrops of exposed rock at the base of the sand-ridges, termed by the Arabs *shuqqa*, and on several occasions we were nearly hurled out of our seats by these obstructions.

361 After five hours of hard driving we reached the fringe of the
609 large oasis of Baraimi, and left our car by a clump of palm trees while our guide went forward to spy out the lie of the land. He returned after an interval of fifteen minutes to report that he had
[567] identified several notorious slave dealers of the Beni Quitab tribe, but could find no signs of a market or slaves. He advised us that the inhabitants were liable to be hostile, in spite of Sir Geoffrey's recent visit, and suggested that we should return as speedily as possible.

Schultz and I had no mind to go back without seeing something of the celebrated 'town', which is in reality a collection of mud huts and tents built around the wells, although there is a small fortified building and we saw one or two shops in the open bazaar; we therefore decided to ignore Abdul's fears. No sooner had we entered the oasis than we were surrounded by a curious crowd, all *Badus*, who insisted on following us to the bazaar.

[443] The bazaar was a temporary structure opened by migrant dealers for the sale of cheap cloths and foodstuffs, and there was little of interest for us to see. We looked around for the 'dungeon' in which slaves were reputed to be detained pending their sale, but beyond the small fort and one or two other coral buildings, could see nothing which resembled a prison. Among the crowd, however, we did notice several negroes whose legs bore the marks of iron chains and the healed scars of a lash, but they were quickly hurried out of sight at our approach and we were not allowed to
609 question them. When we attempted to enter the door of the fort the crowd's attitude became threatening and for a moment I thought they would attack us.

At length the head Bedouin came forward and asked us what we wanted in Baraimi. We replied that we were friends of Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali and had come to take photographs of the oasis. This appeared to satisfy him, but it was significant that we were not invited into any of the tents or asked to partake of coffee. Plainly, our presence was not desired, and when the headman coldly enquired whether it would not be advisable if we returned

other explorers have penetrated this desert in the past, including the Swiss, Burchardt, and Wrede, whilst few parts of its thousand miles' expanse have not been crossed by caravans through the centuries. I have met Bedouins who claimed to have made the journey from Baraimi to Aden via the Rub-al-Khali in a year, and in the section that I visited in 1945 there were signs of old tracks, wells and encampments which proved that it is not the unknown region that some travellers would make it out to be.

From the day of my arrival in Trucial Oman I had determined to visit the Rub-al-Khali directly the opportunity presented itself, and my interest was stimulated by the report that an R.A.F. pilot had flown over the Ar Rimal, or eastern section of this desert. The Rub-al-Khali extends as far as Baraimi, south-west of which are vast areas which certainly have not been explored by Europeans, and which are known to few of the tribes, the reason for this being that some hundreds of square miles are entirely waterless.

I was fortunate in meeting this pilot who had made the flight, and in the mess one night he gave me an interesting account of his trip across the desert from Salala to Sharjah, a distance of nearly six hundred miles. On an Air Ministry map he traced the route he had approximately flown and excited my interest by pointing out a region near Al Maharadh, where, he said, he had noticed what appeared to be a small town. On descending to five hundred feet he had observed that the buildings were all ruins, and included several fort-like structures. They were situated on a hill rising steeply out of the desert, which he estimated to be about five hundred feet above sea-level. Before I left him we worked out the position of these ruins, which lie about twenty miles south of the Liwa desert and between 22° and 24° longitude and 52° and 54° latitude.

My fourteen days' leave fell due at the end of the month, and I was determined to spend it on a visit to the Rub-al-Khali and, if circumstances were favourable, in searching for the ruins of this city. Lieut. Schultz, who had accompanied me on my trip to Baraimi, was extremely eager to go with me when he heard of the project; by good fortune his local leave fell due at the same time and he was able to persuade his commanding officer, Major Raimer, to lend him a four-wheeled-drive truck for the journey.

Realizing that the British authorities would not give me their blessing for the excursion, we kept our destination a close secret and even the members of my staff at the Fort were not aware that

small oasis with wells and a date garden. We were presently joined by a crowd of Bedouins who peered at us in wonder, and when Hamid informed them that we were proceeding into the Rub-al-Khali they began to laugh. An aged *Badu*, who inspected our car with great interest, threw up his hands and shouted: 'Inshillah, but they must be mad!'

Mad or not, we were determined to proceed with our journey without delay and, as soon as our Arabs has said their midday prayers—with a special invocation for the protection of Allah during our entry into the unknown—we mounted our camels and set forth. Musa, the driver who was to take the car back to Sharjah, gave us a cheerful send-off, betraying relief that he was not included in the party, and leaving the caravan route on our right we cantered over the desert in the direction of Latir, the site of a disused well.

After five hours of fairly comfortable travel we reached the district known as Dhafra, which is composed of flat, waterless desert relieved by occasional dunes and patches of *andab* grass. We stopped here to allow the camels to graze and pitched our tents under the shoulder of a sandhill. We estimated that we were approximately a hundred miles south-west of Barajmi, and east of the Manasir desert. Schultz and I climbed to the top of a dune to watch the sun sink below the horizon; the desert stretched out on every side as far as the eye could see, and we appeared to be in the centre of a vast, treeless plain. A desert sunset is an unforgettable sight and quite unlike anything one sees in Europe; banners of scarlet and gold are unfurled in the sky, the clouds glow with a translucent iridescence, and, as the stars appear one by one, at first pale and glimmering, then with the brightness of white fire, a purple haze covers the desert. Shadows lengthen from the dunes until they merge in the twilight gloom and then, as if a curtain had been drawn across the world, night falls suddenly in folds of cold, black silence.

The next day we continued southwards through the Liwa region to Idd, where we were fortunate to find an old well with water at ten fathoms. It lay in a bush-covered hollow of the dunes and the cameleers set to with a will to open up the shaft which had fallen in. Hamid reckoned that the well had not been used for many years and was surprised to find any water there. He gave me a taste of it from his goat's-skin, but it was horribly brackish and I was glad we had a good supply in our water-bottles.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

The camels were exceedingly thirsty and greedily drank the dirty grey water which Sayid bin Salih, the cameleer, brought to them in a bucket. There were a few crops of the *abal* bush for them to graze upon, and Hadi put some of these in his pot to boil with the rice, as a substitute for vegetables.

We had made good progress so far and were four days out from Sharjah; although it was early afternoon when we reached Idd the weather was hot and humid, the barometer registering 90° F. There was no point in tiring either the camels or ourselves, so we decided to encamp here for the night. The Arabs lay down under their tents and went to sleep, whilst Schultz and I explored the neighbourhood. As far as the eye could see the desert was bare of vegetation, with occasional dunes and ridges of hard sand and limestone conglomerate. In the distance, by the aid of our glasses, we could see the dim outlines of a peak or large hillock, which we estimated to be fifty miles due south of our camp.

The desert sloped gently away from Idd towards an unbroken steppe, littered with outcrops of volcanic rock and sandstone boulders. Two miles away we were surprised to find a shallow depression, about two hundred yards long, with pink sandstone walls rising to fifty feet in places. These cliffs were studded with tiny fossil shells, similar to the molluscs I had picked up on Sharjah beach. The skeleton of an ibex, still covered with its skin, lay in the sand beside a dead *abal* bush. The creature had evidently died from starvation. Of other forms of animal life there were no signs, and we did not even see an insect in this pit of death; on our way back to the camp, however, Schultz spotted a fork-tailed lark, which, according to Mr. Philby, is one of the few birds which inhabit the interior of the Rub-al-Khali.

Ahmed bin Aziz, one of the guides, greeted us with some excitement when we got back to the camp and said he had seen a bustard (*houbari*) flying overhead; he had fired at it, but it was too high to hit. Neither Schultz nor myself had heard a shot, which we supposed was due to the curious formation of the dunes, which had a trick of muffling sound. We had heard that there were so-called 'singing sands' in this region, which gave forth a booming sound, but the guides were unable to give us any information concerning this. In the camp we found a small mantis and two red spiders but, owing to the scarcity of vegetation, there was scarcely any animal life here.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

000 Curiously enough, I was reading a similar passage from the Koran, the Chapter of the Ant, which ran:

'It was said unto her, Enter the palace. And when she saw it, she imagined it to be a great water; and she discovered her legs, by lifting up her robes to pass through it. Whereupon Solomon said unto her, Verily this is a palace, evenly floored with glass. Then said the Queen, O Lord, verily I have dealt unjustly with my own soul, and I resign myself.'

The camels were getting restless and Hamid ordered the men to take them out to graze. Here two of the she-camels were milked and they growled viciously. Dusk was falling and we had an early supper and retired to bed. Two days remained to us for the journey westwards, and we were eager for what the future held in store.

487 We continued our journey the next day in a southerly direction, •133 leaving on our left the site of an old Bedouin encampment known as Umm al 'Amad, which has a hillock and a single *samr* tree, but no wells that we could see. This region the Arabs call Al Maharadh. The sands were covered with curious round pebbles and black stones, some of them sharp enough to cut the camels' feet so that two of the beasts had to be bound. The going was very rough and we made slow progress, the distance for that day not exceeding twenty-five miles. There was no herbage for the camels to eat, so we had to feed them on the rations which Hamid had wisely provided for such a contingency. Our own supplies were running fairly low, and Schultz and I gave up the luxury of shaving and rationed ourselves to a pint of water each a day, which we supplemented with camels' milk.

Ten miles ahead we encountered a series of high sand ridges which made our progress even more cumbrous, and in the valleys between these dunes the sand was often dangerously soft and deep. Several times our camels' legs were submerged as far as their knees. I thought of the moving sands at Dahna, which Wrede, the explorer, had encountered over a century ago, and wondered whether these contained similar pitfalls. We decided not to go ahead, but to take a course due south-east in the direction of Qara. By so doing we were able to ride on the crest of the dunes, which run in a north-westerly curve, and avoid the dangerous sinking sands.

It was as well that we did so, for we were told later by a party of Bedouins whom we encountered on the return journey, that these sands get worse and worse towards the western desert and have swallowed up whole caravans of camels. We were fortunate from another point of view. When about ten miles from Qara, Abdulla, the ex-slave, who was walking beside the leading camel, suddenly gave a great shout. He pointed towards the shimmering horizon and, shading our eyes, we could just see the flat summit of a large hill which seemed to rise steeply out of the desert. It was one of those curious rock formations one sometimes sees in the Rub-al-Khali, and we decided to ride towards it. From the summit we might obtain a good view of our surroundings, for we had lost our bearings, and were not quite sure whether Qara lay behind or ahead of us.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, after a hard gallop across the sands, we reached the slopes of the hill, which was about five hundred feet above sand-level. The summit, which I estimated was a thousand yards long, was as flat as a billiard table, and the crumbling sandstone cliffs were precipitous and slippery. The camels were left grazing on some *harm* bushes at the foot of the hill, while Schultz, Hamid and I climbed the rock, reaching the summit after a stiff climb. It was not quite as flat on top as we had imagined. The sides were smooth and covered with a layer of sand, but in the centre there was a large bowl-shaped depression with gently-sloping sides. The slopes were profuse with vegetation, including stunted *gharf* and *samr* bushes, and a short, dry grass with razor-like edges. What took our breath away, however, was the sight of a derelict town at the base of this bowl.

The buildings covered about two acres, and were surrounded by a low wall of crumbled sandstone blocks, which at one time had been much higher. Most of the buildings were a mass of rubble, so that it was difficult to distinguish houses or streets, but two of the towers were still standing; these measured thirty feet in circumference and were forty feet high. The tops were not crenellated like the fort towers of Oman, but smooth and unembellished, with small lookouts through which one had a good view of the surrounding desert. The walls themselves were in places four feet thick, the stone blocks—the largest of which measured two feet in length and eighteen inches in width—being held together by a rough mortar made of gypsum and clay.

We asked Hadi how old he thought the city was, and he pulled

named for its main town—Sharja, Ras al Khaima, Umm al Quwain, 'Ajman, Dibai (Dubai) and Abu Dhabi, on the Persian Gulf, and Kalba on the Gulf of Oman. The ruling sheikhs have had protective treaty agreements with Great Britain since 1853. At that time, a truce was declared between the British government and the different principalities which put an end to piracy in these waters and earned them the designation of the "Trucial States."

The east coast is mountainous, with hills rising abruptly from the Gulf of Oman, but most of the Persian Gulf littoral is low and sandy. The coast is bordered by salt creeks and lagoons, many of which unite inland to form mangrove swamps, while numerous reefs and islands stud the shallow waters

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133 offshore. The interior country in the north is hilly, with an average elevation of about 500 feet, but toward the southwest it becomes progressively flatter and more desolate. The portion from Abu Dhabi to Khor al Odaid is barren and virtually uninhabited.

132 The climate is particularly trying in the summer months from May to October, when temperatures of 115° F. and humidity readings of 90 to 98 per cent are frequently recorded. In contrast, the days from November to February are agreeably cool, while the nights often are cold. The rainfall is irregular, and normally approximates 4 to 5 inches a year. It is usually concentrated in sudden and violent storms during the mid-winter months.

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

NM 162 The population of Trucial Oman is not accurately known, but in 1951 it was estimated at about 80,000, including Bedouin 144 tribes totaling possibly 8,000. The settled inhabitants are of mixed racial stock. They are predominantly Arabs, but Negro admixtures, descendants of former slaves from Africa, and communities of Baluchis, Iranians 795 and Indians are prominent. Except for a few Hindus, the majority are Moslems. Most of the Arabs belong to the Wahhabi branch of the Sunni sect of Islam.

468 The chief occupations of the people are 228 pearl diving, fishing, shipbuilding and date cultivation. Some of the best pearling reefs in the Persian Gulf are found off the Trucial Coast, and Dibai long has been recognized as the center of activity in the southern Gulf region. The industry has declined within recent years, but, in more favorable times, thousands of pearling vessels are said to have put out from Trucial Oman ports each season from early summer to November.

241 Agriculture is of secondary importance, being confined to areas in which water is available for irrigation. Date groves exist along the coast as far west as Abu Dhabi, and small amounts of millet, wheat, tobacco

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia

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E. TRUCIAL OMAN

Area

This region, formerly known as the Pirate Coast, extends for more than 300 miles from the Khōr el-'Odeid on the S. frontier of El-Qatar to the S. border of Ru'ūs el-Jibāl, the northern promontory of Oman; it receives its name from the permanent truce established between the five recognized ruling Sheikhs of **Abu Dhabi, Dibai, Shārjah, 'Ajmān,** and **Umm el-Qaiwein** by the agreement of 1853 with the British Government. Ru'ūs el-Jibāl (see p. 248) is an isolated district of the Sultanate of Oman, the Trucial frontier, between Ras Sha'am on the Gulf Coast and a spot between the villages of Dibah and Bei'ah on the Gulf of Oman, cutting it off from the bulk of the Sultan's territory. From Dibah-Bei'ah the eastern frontier follows the coast for about 50 miles to a point between Khōr Kalba and Mureir, where it turns inland, first westwards, then southwards, passing N. of the districts of Mahadhah and Jau, till it reaches that of Khatam; from this point the inland boundary is the edge of the Ruba' el-Khāli and Jāfūrah deserts, running more or less parallel to the Gulf. By far the greater part of the region, therefore, consists of low country along the Persian Gulf; only at the eastern extremity is there a mountainous district formed by the spinal range of the Oman promontory. The whole western part of this great area is little known and sparsely populated, the capitals of the five principalities affected by the truce all lying in the eastern portion.

The more important land communications of Trucial Oman converge upon the Bireimi oasis (see p. 282), which is connected by various routes with Abu Dhabi, Ras el-Kheimah, Dibai, Sohār, and Hasa. Many routes cross the peninsula, linking places on the two gulfs; such are those from Dibai to Shinās, Shārjah to Mureir, Umm el-Qaiwein to Fujeirah, and Ras el-Kheimah to Dibah.

Physical Character

The coast along the Persian Gulf is low and monotonous; the hills visible from the sea in the NE. section near Ras el-Kheimah soon recede from view. To the W. of Abu Dhabi the shore is lined by a labyrinth of shoals, reefs, and islands, rendering navigation difficult even for native boats. To the E. of that place it is open, but shallow, and exposed to the full force of the *Shamāl* (NW. wind).

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
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133 The coast on the Gulf of Oman is bolder, the hills sometimes coming down to the water's edge, and the hilly tract inland, perhaps 20 miles in breadth, is the highest part of the whole territory. The interior of Trucial Oman, approached from the Persian Gulf, consists of a low and sandy maritime plain (*taff*) almost entirely unsuited for tillage, though not without natural vegetation and even wood, and provided with enough wells and water-holes to support a scanty Bedouin population. Beyond the *taff* are inland plains containing tracts with occasional cultivation, of which *Jiri*, *Dheid*, and *Liwah* are the best known.

Climate

132 Between November and April the heat is bearable and the nights are cool. From May to September the climate is excessively hot. The rainfall, which is confined to the winter months, is believed to be about 5 in., and would therefore approximate to that of Bahrein (see p. 312).

Population

162 619 The ethnology of the tribes inhabiting Trucial Oman is often intricate and perplexing. The tribes which are numerically the most important are the following:

Beni Yās, in the Abu Dhabi Principality (10,000 settled, 2,000 nomadic); Sharqiyīn, in the *Shameilīyah* tract and *Ras el-Kheimah* district in the Oman promontory (7,000 settled); Āl 'Ali, chiefly at *Umm el-Qaiwein* (6,750 settled); Āl Bu Maheir, in all coast towns (5,500); Sūdān, in coast towns and *Bu Mūsa* Island (5,000); Na'īm, in Central Oman promontory (3,500 settled and 1,200 nomad); Za'āb, in *Jezīrat el-Hamra* and *Khōr Kalba* in the Shārjah Principality (3,500); Ahl Ras el-Kheimah, in the town and district of that name (2,000); Shihūh (2,500) and Taneij (2,500 settled and 1,500 nomad), in the same places; Beni Qitab (2,000 nomad), in Shārjah territory; Shweihiyīn (2,000), in *Dibai* and *Shārjah*. Several of these tribes are also represented in the Sultanate of Oman, in El-Qatar, and in Bahrein. In addition may be mentioned 1,500 *Hūwalah* in *Shārjah* town; 1,400 Baluchis at *Dibai*; about 2,500 Persians in *Abu Dhabi* and *Dibai* towns, *Khōr Fakkān* and *Ghāllah*; some hundreds of Hindus in the coast towns, and numerous negro slaves.

162 665 795 The total population has been estimated at over 80,000 only 8,000 being nomadic. The people are divided between the Hināwi

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The Principalities

I. Abu Dhabi

This principality is the largest in area and only second in importance to Shārjah. It stretches along the coast from the creek of Ghanādhah on the N. to that of 'Odeid on the W., a distance of over 200 miles. Towards the interior the boundaries are ill defined; they are said to extend on the E. to the Bireimi oasis, and on the S. to the margin of the Ruba' el-Khāli desert. The settled population is believed to be between 10,000 and 15,000, while the Bedouins (chiefly Beni Yās and Manāsīr) may number nearly 4,000. The ruling Sheikh is Hamdān ibn Zeid el-Khalīfah, who succeeded his brother Tahnūn in 1912, and is described as a firm ruler, able to maintain order. During the period of anxiety following the victories of Ibn Sa'ūd of Nejd in 1913, he endeavoured to introduce arms and ammunition on the plea that the Emir might invade his territories (see above). In the same year he negotiated a truce between the Sultan of Oman and the rebel chiefs. He appears to be a worthy descendant of his predecessor Zeid ibn Khalifah, who in 1908 was the most powerful personality in Trucial Oman. The principality consists of the following districts from E. to W.: Abu Dhabi, Dhafrah (including Beinūnah and Līwah) Sabkhah Matti, Mijan, and 'Aqal, with the possible addition of Khatam. It further includes the islands of Arzanah, Dayyīnah, Dalmah, Dās, Qarnein Salāli, Yās, and Zirko.

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i. *Abu Dhabi*, the 'home district', consists of undulating sandy desert, with scanty grazing and poor water-supply; there are, however, wells on or near the routes to the Bireimi oasis at *Bul Huweil*, *Masheirif*, and *Juhar*, and at *Silmiyah*, 20 miles SSE. of Abu Dhabi town. *Sūq Iblīs*, about 25 miles E. of the town, is a fantastically shaped outcrop of sandstone forming a landmark on the main Bireimi road. *Sameih*, 6 or 7 miles E. of Khōr el-Ghanādhah, is a hilly place with 7 wells of poor water used as a rendezvous by tribesmen of Abu Dhabi and Dibai when preparing for war. The only village of consequence is *Batīn* on the N. shore of the inlet of the same name, 1½ miles SW. of the nearest part of Abu Dhabi town; it consists of 130 date-branch huts belonging to the Āl Bu Maheir and Sūdān tribes; it has some date plantations with wells, and 50 pearl-boats.

634 133 361

The town of **Abu Dhabi** is situated on the coast, about 88 miles SW. of Shārjah, with a population of over 6,000. It extends for about 1½ miles along the shore, and consists chiefly of mat huts,

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361 621 438 with only a few stone buildings; the Sheikh's large rectangular fort, with towers at the corners, is a little distance inland behind the town, and on the outskirts in the same direction is a bazaar of Indian traders from Tatta in Sind. There are some indifferent wells at the back of the town, and shallow pits yield water at a place 3–4 miles distant; formerly water was brought by sea from Dibai. The bazaar has about 70 shops, more than half of which are kept by Persians, and a third by Hindus. The people live almost entirely by pearl-diving and fishing, there being little cultivation, but they own more than 700 camels. About half are of the Beni Yās tribe, the remainder of various other tribes, chiefly Āl Bu Maheir, Sūdān, and Marar. The Persians number 500, the Hindus less than a hundred.

At high tide Abu Dhabi becomes an island, through the connexion of creeks and backwaters. About 10 miles inland there is a ford on the creek called *Khōr el-Maqta'*, connecting the interior of Khōr el-Batīn with the sea at a point 2 or 3 miles beyond the town. Here a fort on a sandbank in the middle of the creek commands the passage to the mainland, which can only be made on foot at low tide.

634 •133 361 ii. *Dhafrah*, between the Persian Gulf on the N. and the Great Desert on the S., is bounded on the W. by Sabkhat Matti and the Jāfūrah desert, and on the E. by Khatam. It is a vast region, containing at least five known tracts, *Līwah*, *Beinūnah*, *Qufa*, *Taff*, and *Dhafrah Proper*. Līwah, the most important, lies farthest inland; it is a narrow belt 175 miles long, running E. and W., and consisting of undulating white sand-dunes, with a series of more than 20 depressions, each of which contains fertile soil and supports the cultivation of a neighbouring village; water is obtained at about 12 ft. Beinūnah is a tract of heavy red sand or soil, with scrub and grazing, lying NW. of Līwah, and between it and the Gulf. Qufa, N. of Līwah, is a barren region of sandy ridges, with a few shallow wells; Taff, a maritime strip extending the whole length of Dhafrah. The tract of Dhafrah Proper is E. of Beinūnah, and resembles it in character. The inhabitants of the whole of Dhafrah belong to the Beni Yās and Manāsīr tribes. The remaining tracts are of less importance. iii. *Sabkhah Matti* is a coastal district W. of Beinūnah, extending for a distance of about 30 miles and consisting of a saline or nitrous marsh without wells or vegetation. iv. *Mijan*, W. of the preceding, is a district of stony mounds and firm pebbly tracts, with some grazing in winter, and a good many wells. v. *'Aqal*, between Mijan and the base of the peninsula of El-Qatar, is a tract of heavy dark sand. vi. *Khatam* lies NE. of Dhafrah Proper,

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and is said to be a meeting-ground of the Beni Yās, Manāsīr, and Na'īm tribes. 634

Of the islands, only *Dalmah* and *Yās* need be described. The former lies more than 40 miles E. by S. of the mouth of the *Khōr el-'Odeid*, and about half that distance from the nearest point of the coast to the SE. It is 5 miles by 2½ miles, and for the most part hilly, with wells of brackish water and deposits of red oxide of iron. There is a small settlement of Beni Yās; but the chief importance of the island is that at the end of the pearling season a temporary bazaar is set up, and persons engaged in the trade, including the Indian merchants of the Trucial Coast, go there to collect debts and purchase pearls. Yās is about 20 miles SE. of Dalmah, and only a few miles from the shore at Jebel Dhannah. It is 6½ miles by 5 miles, with low shores, but central volcanic hills; at the S. end is a landlocked natural harbour known to British sailors as Meriton Bay, with a depth of 4–6 fathoms. Water is only obtainable after rain. The island is visited in winter by Beni Yās fishermen. 133 361

II. Dibai

This small principality lies on the Gulf Coast S. of Shārjah, between Abu Heil on the N. and the creek Khōr Ghanādhah on the S.; its extent towards the interior is not precisely known. It consists of low sandy country without important natural features, the only hill being Jebel el-'Āli, 19 miles SW. of Dibai town, which, though only 225 ft. high, is a landmark visible for 17 miles. The town contains almost the whole settled population, the only other places with permanent inhabitants being the small coast village of *Jumeirah*, 3 miles to the SW., and the larger isolated village of *Hajarein*, 50 miles away to the SE. in the Wādi Hatta, an isolated dependency, geographically belonging to the Sultanate of Oman. 635 133 361

The ruler of Dibai is Sheikh Sa'īd ibn Makhtūm, who succeeded his cousin Būti ibn Suheil in 1912, and is at feud with the latter's family. He is a wealthy chief, owing to the commercial importance of his capital, but his relations with the Indian Government have not been uniformly good; in August 1913 he had to be warned because a boat of H.M.S. *Sphinx* was fired on from the town. There had been trouble under previous rulers, chiefly owing to the use of Dibai by smugglers of arms (see above, p. 336). 622

The town of **Dibai**, with a population perhaps not far from 20,000, lies 7 miles SW. of Shārjah and 79 miles NE. of Abu Dhabi, on both sides of a creek with a shallow entrance extending some miles to the SE.; it was once walled, but with the exception of towers on 361 438 162

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broken from control under the influence of the sheikh of Fujeirah. The town of Dibah, the appanage of another relative, who enjoys the title of Vali, in like manner adds nothing to the exchequer of the Sheikh.

The principality, in its undiminished state, consisted of four districts, Ras el-Kheimah in the N., Shameilīyah on the E., Dheid in the interior, and Shārjah proper on the W. The island of Sirri is claimed by Persia, and is no longer effectively occupied by the Sheikh of Shārjah. The districts are described in the following sections:

i. *Ras el-Kheimah* is divided from the Ru'ūs el-Jibāl district of the Oman Sultanate on the NE. by a line running obliquely from Ras esh-Sha'am on the W. coast of the promontory to a point between the villages of Dibah and Bei'ah on the E. coast; on the W. its boundary is the sea; the S. boundary follows a line drawn from Jezīrat el-Hamra to the S. extremity of the Jiri plain, from which point a line to Dibah forms the limit on the SE. The district consists of low sandy desert near the sea, rising to the hill country of the Oman promontory. Its chief subdivisions are the plain of *Sīr*, a cultivated strip on the coast, extending from about 3 miles S. of Rams to about 7 miles S. of Ras el-Kheimah town, with a length of about 12 miles and an extreme breadth of about 5 miles in the S.; and *Jiri*, immediately S. of Sīr, a cultivated plain of dark soil between the Oman hills on the E. and sandy desert on the W. The upper part of the Wādi Hām, dividing the district from Shameilīyah, belongs to Ras el-Kheimah. Several islands are also connected with the district. *Jezīrat el-Hamra* (also called *Jezīrat ez-Za'āb*), which is low and sandy, lies 12 miles WSW. of Ras el-Kheimah town; it runs for 2 miles parallel to the coast, with which it is nearly joined at low water. *Bu Mūsa*, in the Gulf, about half-way between Shārjah town and Lingeh on the Persian coast, has a maximum length of about 3 miles; it also is low and sandy, with occasional isolated hills, possessing about 20 wells and a small date plantation. There is a permanent population of about 20 households from *Khān* in Shārjah, owning pearl-boats and live stock, and a shifting population composed of fishermen from the mainland of Oman and Persians who work deposits of re l oxide of iron for a Lingah contractor. *Sīr Bu Na'air* lies about 70 miles from the coast, a little S. of W.; it is 2½ miles by 2 miles, uninhabited, with hills of volcanic rock, a low sandy point in the SE., and neighbouring pearl-banks; it possesses brackish wells and salt deposits in the hills. *Tunb*, about 32 miles NE. of Bu Mūsa, with a few permanent inhabitants and a well on the S. side, is about 2¼ miles in diameter, and rises

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634 133 361 to 165 ft. at its highest point; except for a little grazing it is barren. *Nābiyu Tunb*, 8 miles to the W. of Tunb, with an area of 1 mile by ½ mile, is uninhabited and without water.

[632] 361 621 438 The town of **Ras el-Kheimah,** consisting of about 1,000 houses and forming the administrative centre of the district, is on the Gulf Coast, about 48 miles N. of Shārjah town. Sheikh Sālim ibn Sultān claims to be independent of Shārjah, but his independence has not yet been recognized. The town stands upon a narrow spit of land 2½ miles long, running parallel to the coast and connected with the mainland at the SW. end; the creek between the spit and the shore, though its entrance at low tide is only 2 ft. deep, has a general depth of 9 ft., and forms a good anchorage for native boats; large vessels must anchor 2½ miles to 3 miles NW. of the town.

About half of the houses are of stone and gypsum mortar, the remainder of date-branches. There is an old fort of no military value, and a ruinous wall crosses the isthmus SW. of the town. The inhabitants are a mixed race known as Ahl Ras el-Kheimah, occupying 400 houses, Mahārah (250 houses), Āl 'Ali (150 houses), and Āl Bu Maheir (120 houses), with a few Na'īm, Baluchis, and Khōjahs. Drinking-water is scanty and of poor quality. The town possesses about 16,000 date-palms, while the large groves belonging to *Sīr* begin on the mainland opposite the town. The people own 33 pearl-boats and 15 other sea-going vessels, with about 120 fishing-boats; live stock includes some 800 goats, 150 cattle, 175 donkeys, 130 camels, and 20 horses. Trade resembles that of other ports on the Trucial Coast; the chief manufacture is of daggers. At Mahārah, the site of an old village on the E. side of the creek, there is usually a temporary colony, sometimes of Persians from Rams. The chief villages, of 100 houses and above, are as follows:——

In Ras el-Kheimah district:

1. *Rams*: 400 houses, mostly of mud and stone, on the coast about 8 miles NE. of Ras el-Kheimah town, on the S. side of a small creek with shallow entrance. The inhabitants are Taneij, chiefly pearl-divers and fishermen, but owning date plantations partly situated at *Dhāyah*, a place now uninhabited, 2 miles inland. Live-stock includes 500 goats, 50 donkeys, 20 camels, 20 head of cattle.

2. *Sha'am*: about 300 houses, mostly of mud, on the coast 17 miles NNE. of Ras el-Kheimah town and 2 miles S. of Ras Sha'am. Inhabitants are all Shihūh, occupied with pearl-diving, fishing, and cultivation, and owning a few pearl-boats and coasting vessels, with 7,000 date-palms. Live stock: 50 donkeys, 30 camels, 20 head of cattle. About 1 mile S. is a small tower upon a hillock used for defence.

The Trucial Coast

133 The most typical feature of this mono-
502 tonously low and sandy coast is the khor, or
721 salt-water inlet. Most of these inlets are little more than ten feet deep, and boats other than those constructed by the maritime robbers of old were unable to approach with-

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TO
133 in two miles from their entrances. Thus it
502 was that the pirate tribes were able to build
721 their towns behind these natural booms, and to carry on their ruthless calling in defiance of the British and Portuguese navies — and to earn for their stronghold the much feared and romantic name, "The Pirate Coast".

TO Trucial 'Oman, as it is called today, is ruled
101 by six independent sheikhs, bound under old
631 treaties with Britain to maintain a maritime
648 truce for the prevention of piracy and slave-
628 trading. Family feuds and inter-tribal quar-
[527] relling are as common among them as are the rusty, ancient cannon. Many of the latter are no doubt from British men-o'-war, and some are still used for ceremonial occasions, a party afterwards being despatched to retrieve the cannon-balls.

TO
361 Unspoiled by time, Sharjah is one of the
504 principal little towns, but it lacks the en-
439 chantment of Dibai, a picturesque centre a few miles along the coast to the west. A wide, shallow inlet divides Dibái and its waterfront of quaint little coffee-houses, and pro-

TO vides anchorage for dhows that bring trans-
443 shipped goods from other continents. In the
501 large market-place, spread on either side of
B the inlet and connected by a ferry-service of
302 numerous little pole-propelled craft, the
1111 bedouin, with his henna-dyed beard and ancient rifle, can be seen fingering everything that is on show, from modern radio sets to ladies' lingerie, but he has little use for some of the strange products of the West.

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